

**THE STORY  
OF  
THE VERY FIRST CHRISTMAS**



**WILDER SERIES**













*Madonna St. Sixtus.*

*Raphael.*

THE STORY  
OF  
THE VERY FIRST CHRISTMAS

BY  
CHARLOTTE F. WILDER

---

Copyrighted 1915, by  
CHAS. M. STEBBINS

---

THE STEBBINS PUBLISHING COMPANY  
KANSAS CITY

## FOREWORD.

This little book is a brief sketch, illustrated by a few of the best pictures available, of the incidents in the infancy and early childhood of Jesus.

The subjects are arranged in the chronological order approved in accepted Harmonies, making the book useful for the child, adult, and Bible student.

The great old masters are found here; famous artists are included, and many from the modern schools,—in this book of The Very First Christmas.

CHARLOTTE F. WILDER  
Manhattan, Kansas

(Many of the pictures in this book are copyrighted and are used by permission.)



## THE STORY OF THE VERY FIRST CHRISTMAS

---

The most beautiful story that ever was told is the story of the Christ Child—The Story of the Very First Christmas.

It all began away back “In the Beginning.”

Adam and Eve disobeyed God and were driven out of Paradise. God told them that sometime a child should be born that would help all the world to make a beautiful life, a new Paradise in the soul of each. After many years of waiting, and when the time came for the birth of Jesus, there was special preparation for his coming.

“In the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, . . . and his wife Elizabeth, . . . had no child, . . . and it came to pass, . . . there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. Zacharias was troubled.” The angel said, “Fear not. Thy prayer is heard—I shew thee good tidings.”

Then the angel told the priest about the coming birth of John the Baptist.

There were, perhaps, more than 20,000 priests who served in the Temple at this time. About half of this number lived at Jerusalem, while others lived at Jericho, at Hebron, or in the towns near by. These priests all held good social positions, though divided into classes; “the learned,” who knew and observed the countless laws of ceremonial cleanliness and an almost endless ritual; the “common priests” and the higher rank of priesthood. The lives of this latter class were much like the lives of the corrupt Romans among whom they lived. They were given to gluttony, were given over to luxury,



Zacharias and the Angel.

pride, self-love. They oppressed the poor so as to get the means to gratify their lower nature.

Every priest was of the lineal descendant of Aaron. Their genealogy had to be taken and scrutinized from the ancient records, many witnesses must testify regarding it and the order guarded by countless laws. Among the members of this learned, and sacred caste, was this elderly man with a wife, Elizabeth by name, who was elderly and childless. For this reason they carried a secret sorrow, for, notwithstanding the sweetness and comfort that comes to lives where both are "righteous before God, walking in all the commandments of the Lord blameless," the burden on the heart of every Jewish wife was expressed in Rachel's words, "Give me children, or else I die." Zacharias and Elizabeth were proud of their priestly ancestry that went back through fifteen hundred years, and to have no son to take their father's name and place, gave life a bitter taste.

Like Hannah, their prayers had been constant before the throne for the gift they so much coveted. When a heart has lived with disappointment for years it is slow to accept joy in its place. So we can imagine the fear and doubt that came to the priest when he had laid the coals on the altar, poured the incense on the flames, and its fragrance began to rise above the Temple, and then the mysterious Presence stand at the right side of the altar and say what we have quoted from St. Luke. To rebuke the doubt of the priest and confirm his wavering faith, a dumbness came upon him.

In this first chapter of St. Luke, we find that the prophecy in Malachi,—made about four hundred years before this time,—is to be fulfilled, and the connecting link in this Vision of Zacharias,—is the foretold birth of the forerunner of Jesus Christ, John the Baptist, son of Zacharias and Elizabeth of the house of Aaron.



The Annunciation to the Virgin. *Jalabert.*



Soon after the appearance of an angel to Zachárias; in the fulness of time, an angel came one day to a very good and beautiful woman, named Mary, who lived in Nazareth, in the country of Palestine. She was in her roof-garden among her birds and flowers, reading and praying. In our picture, we see Mary and an angel. The angel has a lily stalk, like a sceptre.

God sent the angel Gabriel to Mary. There were untold ages of God's wonderful love behind the angel's message, and untold ages of human bliss because of the Virgin Mary's answer.

The angel said, "Hail, thou art highly favored, the Lord is with thee."

Mary was afraid, because she did not understand what the angel meant.

Then the angel said, "There is a little Child coming to your home and his name is to be called Jesus, because it is He that shall save His people from their sins. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever."

What a wonderful story for an angel to tell. But it all came true. That is what made our very first Christmas.



Mary's Visit to Elizabeth. *Bouguereau.*

The wife of Zacharias, Elizabeth, was a relative of the Virgin Mary, and though Elizabeth lived far from Nazareth, Mary went to visit her. Elizabeth was an elderly woman and as you know, Luke says, “she was righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.”

Elizabeth was very glad to meet Mary, and the wonderful words she uttered tell us that she was a woman of uncommon greatness of mind and soul. Luke, who wrote for the Greeks, knew that they would understand the Magnificat as spoken by Elizabeth.

After the birth of their son, his father, Zacharias, was again able to speak having been speechless for many months. His song was one of exultant thanks:

“And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways:

To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,

Through the tender mercies of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,

To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”



Naming John the Baptist.



There was great rejoicing among "the neighbors and cousins" with the happy mother when the son of Elizabeth and Zacharias was born. Luke says that on the eighth day when they came to circumcise the child, and give him his name, they called him Zacharias, after his father. His mother said, "Not so; but he shall be called John." And they said unto her, "There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name."

The eager officiousness of the neighbors as they discussed the naming of the child, we can imagine, as well as the quiet decision of the father when they turned to him. With him it was not a matter of choice but of divine appointment. He was not yet able to speak but "they made signs to his father how he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marveled all."

The birth of St. John the Baptist is naturally a prominent art subject in every serial treatment of the life of this forerunner of Jesus Christ.

The pictures of Elizabeth have been as distinctly fixed in art as have the pictures, as a type, of the Virgin; Elizabeth is painted in direct contrast to the Virgin Mary. She is a woman past middle life, with large, well-built figure, a strong face, swarthy in tint, and seamed with wrinkles expressive of strong character. Andrea Pisano gives her a sweet touch of motherliness as she raises the little bed-cover to peep at her babe, who lies in the bend of her arm. Zacharias is seated nearby, writing on his tablet.



Joseph and Mary Arriving at Bethlehem.

When the angel came to the Virgin Mary and foretold the coming of the Child, he said that His name should be Jesus, "for He shall save His people from their sins." Mary's home was in Nazareth, but she came to Bethlehem because all Jews went to their own city at this time of a great census ordered by the Emperor, Caesar Augustus, at Rome.

The Jewish nation, since the days of Pompey, had paid tribute to Rome. This decree of Caesar Augustus was because of the civil wars. He needed an increased revenue, so he required a census to be taken in every province in all the country that he might know how many soldiers he could have, and the amount which could be brought into the treasury. This was in one of the last years of his life,—just before the birth of Jesus Christ, and Herod, kind of Judea, made the whole Jewish nation take a solemn oath of allegiance to himself and to the Emperor Augustus. This year was made a simple registration on the old Hebrew plan of enrolling by families in their ancestral home, so Joseph had no choice but to go to Bethlehem, the city of David, where as a descendant of this royal line, and heir to the throne, his name was inscribed.

This coming from Nazareth to Bethlehem, after the fall rains and the springing up of the autumn flowers, was not a dreary journey. They may have had company all the way, for there were, at that time, over two hundred cities and villages in Galilee, the smallest of which numbered more than fifteen hundred inhabitants.



Bethlehem.



This beautiful village of Bethlehem, "house of bread," is about six miles south of Jerusalem. It is as high above the Mediterranean as the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and in the clear atmosphere one can look off over the hills round about the Holy City and on, down to the purple hills of Moab at the far-away southern horizon. On the hill-slopes were orchards of the fig, olive, pomegranate; and vines in the grape vineyards hung over the terrace banks and looked down on the barley fields below.

At all times the people of this city were noted for their hospitable and friendly ways. Because Joseph and Mary traveled slowly, they arrived after the guest-chambers in the upper rooms of the khan had been given to earlier comers, and so the room they had was a half kitchen and half stable, one of the common cave-like rooms made in the hill-side in many a house in that city to-day. It was one of the pretty oriental cities, and Mary and Joseph found themselves among relatives and friends as soon as their coming was known.

The legends say that the room to which they came was not far from the Tomb of Rachel, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, and when Mary came into it the sun was going down, but it was presently filled with light and became as bright as if the sun shone into the room. The legends are interesting and though we do not credit them as facts, we know that human nature has been the same in all ages, and we must believe that Mary was made comfortable in that cave-guestroom after her long journey to this city of her ancestor, King David.



The Nativity.

*Hofmann.*

The real beginning of the life of our Lord on earth dates from the manger in Bethlehem of Judea, the city of king David. No prince was ever so cradled in love. See the adoring love of the mother! No wonder that the angels are crowding to see this wonderful thing which has happened. Hark! All heaven is rejoicing because the Messiah has come.

“There’s a song in the air! there’s a star in the sky!  
There’s a mother’s deep prayer, and a baby’s low cry!  
There’s a tumult of joy o’er the wonderful birth,  
For the Virgin’s sweet boy is the Lord of the earth.  
Ay! the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing,  
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a king!”  
“In the light of that star lie the ages impearled;  
And that song from afar has swept over the world.  
We rejoice in the light, and we echo the song  
That comes down through the night from the heavenly  
throng.  
Ay! we shout to the lovely evangel they bring,  
And we greet in His cradle our Saviour and King!”

The shepherds who were caring for the sheep that probably would be used in Temple sacrifice, were on the hills near Bethlehem, and they were the first to hear the good news from heaven that a Saviour was born. The long-expected Messiah had come.



*Moran.*

### The Song of the Angels.

It may be the shepherds were talking about the promised Saviour. You know that when we talk or think lovingly about God, He is always near. Of course, they could not understand what God had planned for the world, but they had read the prophets and they knew that Isaiah said that a Child was to be born as the Saviour, and He would "be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." So, when they heard the music from heaven and saw the angels, they knew that God's time had come for Christ to be born. They were amazed, but they listened to the angel and learned





### The Angel Host.

where the Saviour was to be found. And, like all who hear good news, they started off to learn more about it. The next picture shows us where they went.

Mary awoke from a dream. She had been asleep a few minutes. A little lamp of clay, covered with a waxed cloth over a frame, made but a dim light, but by this light she saw Joseph and, oh, it all came back to her,—she saw the Child. It was not a dream, and she put out her arm in loving protection.

She heard voices, and she looked out into the cold, gray light of this first Christmas morning and she saw men at the entrance of their little room. They



*Pierrey.*

### The First Christmas Night.

wore sheep-skin coats, and had sticks big enough to kill wild beasts. But Joseph was there. She heard them talking with him. She saw them coming right straight to her baby. She heard one say, "That is what the angel said. A babe in a manger."

"There! the child!" "The heavenly host!"—and their words tumbled over each other as they crowded close to this great little One who had come to earth to lift earth to heaven.

Then these men, dark and brown, dressed in warm, rough clothing; these men, who could kill wild



*Bouguereau.*

### Adoration of the Shepherds.

beasts but would be tender with the little lambs they carried in their arms,—these shepherds who had seen the glory in the midnight sky that shone with angel forms, and heard the heavenly words and music, stand in silent adoration around the cradle of the new-born King.

But, after a time in the great silence, these men went out into the early morning, and back to the hills where they tended their flocks.

When they went to their homes, do you suppose they had little children who heard, over and over again, the story of the angels and the Christ-child in the manger?



*Dowling.*

### Presentation in the Temple.

Luke tells about a remarkable testimony to our Lord's messiahship from two servants of God, when Joseph and Mary appeared in the Temple and, according to the law of Moses, brought the child to Jerusalem "to present Him to the Lord."

The aged Simeon, "a man just and devout," took the child into his arms, and blessed God, saying, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation—a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."

And an aged widow, Anna, a prophetess, saw the child, "and gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spoke of him to all them that looked for redemption in Israel."

Nearly all the famous art galleries of Europe have pictures of this scene, by the old Masters as far back as one painted by Carpaccio (1510), many of them telling the story with homely simplicity.

There is no one, but at sometime in his life, has wondered what "prophecy" meant. We are told that "it is a foretelling of such events as could only be known to God." It is beyond dispute that there is a Power which governs the world by the exercise of His will; governments are born and nations rise to supremacy, and when they have answered the purpose for which they were permitted to exist, or sinned beyond redemption, they go out of existence.

In the recorded story of the prophecy of Simeon, we find that he predicted events long before they occurred; they were so clearly described that when completed, the description applied exactly to the subject. There must be a Power superior to humanity which gives this knowledge, and the world, more and more, accepts this fact as the years go by.

In the Old Testament, Divine inspiration was imparted to the prophets in a peculiar form. In the twelfth chapter of Numbers it says that this inspiration was obtained in visions and dreams. This was also the way inspiration was given in the New Testament, to Joseph, and later, to Peter, Paul, and John on Patmos. It was different from the inspiration given to Moses, and many of the writers of the Old Testament, and to some of the apostles.

It was given Simeon, the holy, aged priest, the ability to recognize Jesus as the long-expected Messiah when he took him in his arms at the Temple. It has been supposed that this Simeon was the learned son of the famous Hillel, and the father of Gamaliel. But whoever he was, he must have been a man who lived near God; like Enoch, he walked and talked with his



**Lord.** It was known that he had received the divine promise that he should "not taste death till he had seen the Lord's Christ."

In the second chapter of St. Luke we find the facts which the picture describes.



The Wise Men Following the Star.

Persia, away at the east of Palestine, where Daniel was held as a captive and lived, taught, and ruled, had many dreamers, astrologers, and scientists. The astrologers thought that any heavenly disturbance meant that there was a birth of a great man somewhere in the world. The world was very miserable at this time and too wicked for a decent pen to describe. Doubtless these astrologers, who saw a new star in the sky, hoped that it meant the birth of some one who would make the world better, cleaner, purer, and they were very familiar with the Jewish prophecies concerning the expected Messiah or Prince of Peace, and watched for his coming. Whatever they thought, they purposed to leave their homes and follow the star.

See how these Wise Men clung to their purpose, traveling a year or more over deserts, through rivers, over mountains, through heat, and cold; hungry, thirsty, weary, these men with a purpose kept on until they came to Jerusalem.

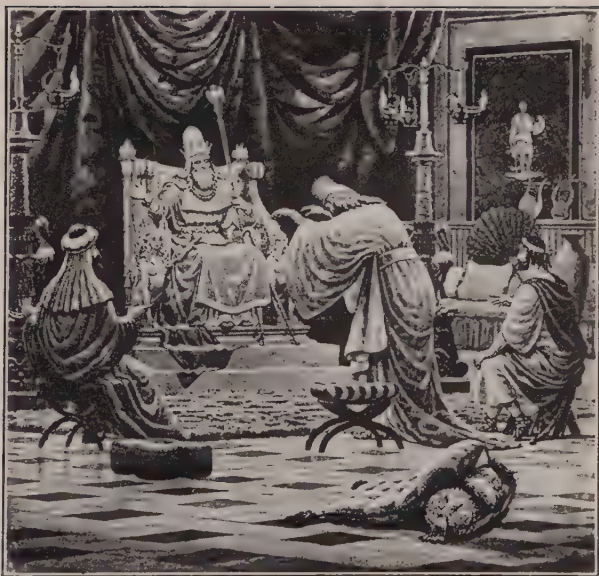
In the picture we see how the moon coldly looks down on them, and a little fire on the ground this winter night, looks as though it might be very comfortable.



### Wise Men Arriving at Jerusalem.

The Wise Men asked, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

When king Herod heard of it he was very much troubled; he gathered the chief priests and scribes and demanded of them, where Christ should be born; and they answered, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for thus it is written by the prophets."



### Wise Men Before Herod.

The King called the wise men, treated them courteously, told them to go to Bethlehem, find the Child and bring him word again.

When the Wise Men left Jerusalem, the star which had led them all the way—went before them to Bethlehem and stood over the house where Mary and the Child were.



### The Star Stood Over the Young Child.

The people of Bethlehem had heard about the mysterious child that the shepherds came to adore, and the child, now a few weeks old, may have been found in the home of relatives or friends of his mother who belonged to the line of king David.

The Wise Men found the child and his mother. The star and the child were close together at last.

Who were these Wise Men? Were they kings, princes, or astrologers? How many? Did they speak Greek? Luke did. Some things we do not know, but this we do know,—they found the Star-Child,—and they fell on their faces before Him.





*Bouguereau.*

### Adoration of the Wise Men.

The shepherds came from curiosity with love and hope in their hearts. The Wise Men came as Ambassadors from their great nation, came to honor, to worship, to adore. And they offered this helpless babe nestling warm against his mother's breast, what they would offer a Monarch,—gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

These Eastern scholars knelt before the Babe in Bethlehem, and then God told them in a dream not to return to Herod, therefore they quietly went away,—leaving Jerusalem far behind.



The Slaughter of the Innocents.

*Dore.*

Perhaps but few men ever lived who were more vile or wicked than Herod, king of Judea. If one came in his way of whom he was jealous, or afraid, to make his own path clear and smooth, murder was his favorite method. His own family suffered from his vileness and hatred. He strangled, starved, murdered, burned, and persecuted. He drowned his brother-in-law, murdered three of his sons, and strangled his wife. And now,—Joseph dreamed about what was to happen in Bethlehem, and he heard a Voice say, “Arise, take the Child, . . . and flee into Egypt.”

You know what happened after they left the city Herod’s soldiers came “and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem and in all the coasts thereof.”

Oh, the awful “cry of Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted, because they were not.”



### Flight Into Egypt.

*Bouguereau.*

Is there a sweeter picture than this, where Joseph, the legal protector of the child goes out in the night with his young wife and the little child hugged to her heart? These three fugitives,—the man led of God through dreams, his beautiful wife, and the sleeping babe going down into the shelter of Egypt while the first martyrs to this child's name were dying in the city they had left behind.

If they came to a large city they passed it by.

Did the mother sleep with the child on her heart in the arms of the great Sphinx?

Perhaps not, but there must have come a great re-



### The Flight Into Egypt.

*Portals.*

pose, a great rest and comfort to the soul of this young mother, when she reached the boundary line beyond which Herod dared not pass.

This boundary line was a little river with the long name, Rhinokolura.

None of the Evangelists tell us where the Holy Family abode in Egypt or how long they remained in exile. Legends say they remained two years and their home was a few miles northeast of Cairo. In early days a fountain was shown where Jesus had made the water fresh, and there was a large sycamore tree under which they rested. St. Matthew mentions the cause of their





The Shadow of the Cross.

(1894)

flight and speaks of their return. He reminds the Jews, for whom he writes, of the significance of the word of the prophet Hosea, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son."

One day, in the South-land, the little child came to his mother with his arms outstretched and the shadow of the child fell upon the ground before him. We see the picture the artist has given us. A picture made by children since the world began. But did this mother who had many things "hid in her heart," remember what the aged Simeon said in the Temple? "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against: (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.)"

The mother never knew, in all the boyhood of her son, what it was to be under any shadow of the cross. The whole childhood was like a quiet calm in the round of daily duties. He lived as other children lived in that country village, and as they live there to-day. He dressed like other children, in a gay-colored tunic of silk or linen, a loose outer jacket of white or blue, and a sash of gay stripes. He studied the Scriptures at his mother's knee, and shouted them, as he studied, sitting on the floor of the synagogue at the feet of the rabbi, with the other boys of the village. He climbed the hills, played the simple games, and laughed, and sang, with other boys around the fountain where, to this day, the villagers gather for water, amusement, or gossip.

The mother was a busy, happy woman. The son early learned the homely, economical ways of the family; that it was not wise to use old bottle-skins for new wine, or patch old garments with new cloth, and these homely lessons he applied in the great things of life in church and state. The mother was rich and blessed in having such a little boy in her home,—her simple home,



Anno Domini or Flight Into Egypt. *Long.*

where could be lived the uneventful life. There was very little furniture to be dusted, the mats were kept scrupulously clean and spread out only at night, the table and bench were often scoured, and the food was sweet and wholesome.

The home life in Egypt was predicted by Hosea, and St. Matthew says, in Speaking of Joseph, the wise care-taker of the mother and her precious Child, "And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene." These were prophecies little understood by his nation.

How much the mother understood regarding the life and mission of her son we cannot tell. How much she felt the shadow of the cross, we cannot know. She kept her thoughts "hid in her heart." But though the childhood and early manhood of her son were quiet and calm, when he became a man, and began his great life-work, then the storm burst on his mother's head. "The sword,"—as predicted by the aged Simeon,—over and over again, pierced through her loving heart. But, like the mother of this and every age, she remembered the loving, obedient childhood and found comfort in its sweetness. Remembrance is the only paradise from which a mother cannot be driven.



The Return to Nazareth.

*Dodson.*

Joseph and Mary were in Egypt about two years. News traveled in a slow way in those days. They learned that Herod was dead, and though God told Joseph in a dream to go back into the land of Israel, and he wanted to go to Bethlehem, yet, when he heard that Herod's son, Archelaus, reigned in Judea in place of his father Herod, Joseph was afraid to go into that country. So, instead of making their home with congenial friends and among relatives at Bethlehem, they did not stop in Judea, but, like many in the world since that day, made second choice in the acceptance of home and associations.

They went back to Nazareth, an unpopular town on the hill-side near the great caravan roads, and from where could be seen the mountain-tops in all Galilee, and many of its most beautiful valleys.





Childhood of Jesus.

*Hofmann.*

The plain, simple home and the sweet religious life of the child at Nazareth were shown in the character of the land and man.

Houses and homes, similar to those of 2,000 years ago, are seen in Palestine to-day. Houses of one-story, flat roof, protected by a low wall. If there were an upper room, it was reached by outside stairs. Each room had one door. Birds, flowers, vines, and water-jars in the shade about the open door. A bench on one side of the room. On the wall the work-man kept his tools. A table, a decorated chest, which held the copies of the sacred writings, and the best garments of the family were in every home of the wealthier class.

Everything in the home was exquisitely clean. The Law prescribed the constant use of water. The child bathed before he ate, before he prayed, before he slept, and he never must even touch the "unclean." The law of Moses was a law of sanitation. Physicians of this age marvel at its perfection.

When the child was five years old he began the study of the Law. His kindergarten "plays" were the committing to memory such easy topics as the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. As he grew older he studied history in the books of Genesis, Exodus, and the Prophets. His lessons in Literature, and none finer have ever been written, were found in the Psalms, the book of Job, the philosophy of Solomon, and symbolic and dramatic prophecy.

No wonder that when Jesus was a man, the Scriptures were woven into every fibre of his life. That compulsory study of the Scriptures—by all Jewish boys of the nation, was to the moral character what iron in the blood is to the physical.



Nazareth.

Nazareth was a place which Jerusalem looked upon with contempt. Jerusalem had the Temple. It had the learned Doctors of the Law. It was the home of the High Priest, of the wealthy Sadducees; the king's palaces and theaters were there.

But the town of Nazareth had its advantages, and no bright lad could live near the caravan routes that run near by, to Damascus, from Egypt, Phoenicia, Jerusalem, and traveled by Greeks, Romans, Syrians, Arabs and not get a vast deal of learning and culture such as was then in the world. Yes, the home of Nazareth must have been a bright, busy, happy home.



Jesus in Workshop of Joseph.

This lad must have been a manly boy. He was not one who shirked his tasks. He gave no worry to his mother and learned to help at the work of the day. His mother used her distaff and spindle just as did the women in the days of Miriam, of Esther, or of Ruth, the grandmother of king David and the very own ancestor of the Virgin Mary.

Schools were everywhere among the Jews and the children heard, day after day, in the home, the workshop, the market-place stories of Moses, of Joshua, Samuel, Saul, or king David. They knew about feasts and fastdays; the paschal lamb, phylacteries, and the Passover.

The smallest child saw the reverend manner in which the name of Jehovah was touched, and very early learned to revere that holy name. The youngest in the family knew what exact obedience to parents meant, and he knew, also, that it was required by law.

The character of the boy, Jesus, did not need to be written. The silent days and years speak for themselves as shown in the character of later years.





(Copyrighted 1915, by Chas. M. Stebbins.)

*Beale.*

### Who Led the Caravan?

We talk about the sturdy lads of our day being good mountain-climbers. When we think about the three years of incessant toil and out-door life in the ministry of our Lord, we know that the training for this physical work must have been begun in early youth.

When Jesus was twelve years old he went with Mary and Joseph to Jerusalem, to the great Passover feast. This was in April.

Jesus was a bright, keen, healthy boy, with ex-

actly the eagerness and alertness of the clean, bright boy of every age. He had the temptations that other boys had,—that other boys of to-day have. He had school-mates, and play-mates just as boys have to-day. He played the games that other boys played, that is, if they were square, honest games.

The picture of Jesus and his parents does not show the early morning start in the caravan journey to the Passover. They had provisions ready for a three days' journey. The donkey, with the basket panniers in which provisions or blankets, women or children could be placed, we find in the picture, and, doubtless, was in the caravan. We do not see the light and shade of the scenery when they went through groves of stately trees. We can only imagine the blossoms by the wayside; the red and the blue anemones, the pink phlox, the rock roses.

Do you suppose that Jesus noticed the clear sky, the great trees, the beautiful flowers? Do you think he joined in the songs of Zion which those devout Jews sang as they went down the hills to the western part of the notably beautiful plain of Esdraelon? They sang. Can you hear them?

Who led the Caravan? The aged men of the village,—the rabbis,—and the boys, they could have been but a little behind the leading men. They forded the stream that came down from the hill-slope. Then, before the day was passed, they reached the central tableland of Palestine. They went by the famous mountains that Jesus had often seen in the clear atmosphere from the hill-tops at Nazareth,—Tabor, Gilboa, Ebal, and Bethel. After awhile, they came into the great commercial caravan route to Jerusalem and were among other caravans on their way to the Feast of the Passover.



The Holy Family, Camped for Night. *Beale.*

(Copyrighted 1915, by Chas. M. Stebbins.)

At night, each family cared for its own needs. Jesus was with his parents. He cared for the beast on which his mother had ridden. He went to the spring for water used in cooking the pottage. He helped build the fire and, I think, gathered branches of trees to make a booth and a bed for his mother.

After the evening meal, he sang the hymn and was softly glad in his heart, as he looked at the paschal moon, that he was taking his first journey to the great Passover feast in the Temple in the holy city of Jerusalem.



Jerusalem.

The second day of that journey, the boys walked more soberly. The newness had worn off, and the lads liked to tell each other how they lived, worked, and played.

When they came to the country of Samaria, they would have gone around it if they had been by themselves, but the caravan passed through the country; Jesus saw the political capital of Herod,—the city of Samaria; saw the magnificent temple of granite, marble, and limestone, erected in honor of Emperor Augustus. He saw the limestone cottages among the pomegranate, olive, and figtrees. The caravan passed between the two mountains of Ebal and Gerizim, where Joshua long, long before read the words of the Law to the people.

The children went to the deep well of their father, Jacob, and brought up, in a skin bucket, the cold water. They went by the place where Jacob slept that night he was sorry for his meanness to his brother Esau. They saw the place where Samuel was born, when they went by Ramah. Why! Jesus was going over, for the first time, the very ground where his ancestors lived and worshipped. It all had a deeper meaning to him than Plymouth Rock or Bunker Hill has to the children of our land.

After a time the little rivers ran eastward instead of, like the first one they forded, westward. They came over on the east side of the tableland and, away below them, ran the river Jordan.





Jesus and Parents Going to Jerusalem.

Then came the first sight of the city on a hill far away. Jesus wanted to leave the other boys and walk with his parents as the gates, the palaces, and the

Temple came into sight. Soon they saw the Temple's roof of shining gold, its walls of marble rising above the city walls. Away to the right were the walls of the Roman castles, and the high tower of Antonio. The parents sighed as they saw these signs of Roman power, but Jesus gazed on the beauty and magnificence in silent wonder and awe.

They went down into another valley and, with hundreds of thousands of other Jews, went into the gate of the city, welcomed, perhaps, into the home of friends or kinsfolk, for a week's service.

Jesus would be thirteen on the next Christmas day. Then, by the Jewish religious law, he would be of age and at fourteen could sit at the Passover table. But his parents wanted he should go and see the sacrifices, the services in the Temple, and learn about the Passover feast as he could not away from Jerusalem.

The next morning was the 14th of Nisan and at early dawn the silver trumpet was blown three times from the Temple. The day really began at sunset of the 13th and was the first day of the feast of "Unleavened Bread."

It was all very solemn and very beautiful. The house-mother began her task with prayer. All the baking of the unleavened bread was done in quietness, with exquisite cleanliness, thought, care, and ceremony. When baked, the first loaf was laid aside to be taken to the priest at the Temple.

The Jew was proud of a large family, considering it a sign of God's favor. The government of the children was rigid and exacting, so, we can understand that as Mary went about her religious duties preparing for the Feast in the room that was given them, Jesus observed, listened to the prayers she offered, but asked no questions.



(Copyrighted 1915, by Chas. M. Stebbins.)

*Beale.*

The Boy Jesus Watching the Temple Sacrifice.

In the Temple Jesus saw the sacrifices. He saw the lamb that was slain. He saw that the wood that was used to keep the whole animal in place was taken from the pomegranate with its blood-red blossoms. He noticed that the skewers were put in the shape of a cross. He could ask no questions. He saw the stalls for oxen, sheep, lambs. The thousands of doves in their cages were softly cooing, and this lad from Nazareth wondered what it all meant, and why such seas of blood had been poured out ever since the world began.

He found the boy choirs, one day, and listened to the music from cymbal, lute, harp, and the songs of Zion from the Psalms of David.

In the Temple were great teachers in small rooms, such as we call "Chapels" in our cathedrals. Arched rooms where the learned doctors were glad to have any one come to them who wanted to learn about their great religion. Do you wonder that a bright lad wanted to stop and listen to these lectures and discussions?

It is possible that the very day that the caravan for Nazareth was to start back toward home, it was hindered, and Jesus went back to the Temple to listen once more to the doctors who taught the young men. The time seemed short to him. His knowledge of the Scriptures was great, but he wanted to know more. His questions were thoughtful, and all were interested in one who asked such questions and gave such answers.



Jesus Disputing with the Doctors. *Hofmann.*

The Caravan started and went quite a ways. When Mary and Joseph discovered that Jesus was not with them, they returned to Jerusalem and sought him sorrowing. They found their lad sitting among the scholars, and when they heard his questions they were astonished.

“He went down with them and came to Nazareth; and he was subject unto them.”

In all the years Jesus was in the home, he was careful not again to cause his mother to seek him sorrowing.”

We have known such sons in our age. Happy is the young man who can have that said of him.





### The Youth of Our Lord.

*Herbert.*

Tradition says that before Jesus was twenty years old, Joseph died, and Jesus became the caretaker of his mother and the younger children, four brothers, James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude, and two sisters, Esther, and Tamar.

The days went by in the doing of next duties, somewhat as many accordion doors fold in upon themselves. He was like other boys in many of his ways, but the points of compass in his soul always seemed to adjust themselves to the magnetic needle that every time and every where pointed true. In the language of today, he always wanted "the square deal."

He had a wise mother. All the things that puzzled her about the lad "she hid in her heart." Wise mother! Blessed son that has such a mother.

Do children suffer because they cannot understand life? Because they think no one understands them? Because God seems afar off and a great Mystery? Is every child terrified at the problems he meets? Jesus, who saw what might be, as he turned from the Temple among the doctors and learned men at Jerusalem, and then went back to Nazareth uncomplaining, willing obedient, was a child of rare spirit. He put his hand in his mother's, and so cordially accepted the next duties that even her watchful eyes never saw any spirit but that of a willing self-renunciation. He felt the power but could refrain from using it. Browning, in describing the meekness, the self-control of Moses, says, "He felt he had a fist, but folded his arms." Jesus had this marvelous self-control learned in early life. To gain this power in middle life, "Moses was forty years tending the sheep of his father-in-law."

The Wise Men, at the early Christmas time, made no mistake when they laid their gifts at the feet of this Child-Conqueror.

"He waxed strong in body and in spirit, and found favor with God and man."

His next Christmas birth-day made him no longer a boy, but, according to Jewish law and training, at fourteen he became a man.



*Boy Head of Christ.*

*Hofmann.*



*Angel Choir.*

*Reynolds.*

## Hark! the Herald-Angels Sing.

Hark! the herald-angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King;  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild;  
God and sinners reconciled."

Joyful, all ye nations, rise,  
Join the triumphs of the skies;  
With angelic hosts proclaim,  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."

Christ, by highest heaven adored,  
Christ, the everlasting Lord;  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;  
Hail, incarnate Deity!

Hail the heaven-born Prince of peace!  
Hail the Sun of righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings,  
Risen with healing in his wings.

## BOOKS.

THE STORY OF THE VERY FIRST CHRISTMAS. Price, paper bound 25 cents; cloth bound 50 cents.

THE BIBLE STORY IN PICTURES, a connected history of the whole Bible period. 160 pages, 160 beautiful pictures. It makes the Bible Story plain. Price, paper bound 25 cents; cloth bound 50 cents.

Other books of the Wilder series—"The Story of Ruth," "The Story of Esther," "The Book of Job"—will be out soon

STEBBINS PUBLISHING Co., 1028 Main St., Kansas City, Mo.

## STEREOPTICON SLIDES.

All of the pictures in "The Story of the Very First Christmas" were taken from stereopticon slides.

The slides can be purchased at 25 cents each plain, or 50 cents each colored.

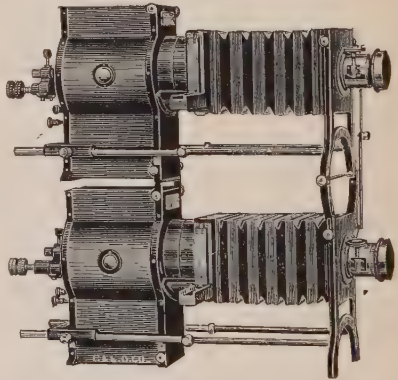
A large number of the sets are kept in stock. Rental rate for Christmas entertainments, set of 36 beauti-

fully colored slides, one use \$3.50; uncolored set, one use \$1.75, plus transportation charges and damages, if any.

Very large stock of slides on Religious, Temperance, Travel, Educational, Historical and general subjects.

Illustrated sermons, evangelistic sets, Children's stories. Stereopticons, Moving Picture Machines and Supplies. Send for catalog and rental lists.

CHAS. M. STEBBINS, 1028 Main St., Kansas City, Mo.













S0-DUL-761

